



(11) **EP 1 338 852 B1**

(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION**

(45) Date of publication and mention
of the grant of the patent:
01.04.2009 Bulletin 2009/14

(51) Int Cl.:
F24F 6/04 (2006.01) **H01M 8/04** (2006.01)
B01D 53/22 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **01979035.1**

(86) International application number:
PCT/JP2001/009702

(22) Date of filing: **06.11.2001**

(87) International publication number:
WO 2002/037033 (10.05.2002 Gazette 2002/19)

(54) **HUMIDIFIER**

BEFEUCHTUNGSVORRICHTUNG

HUMIDIFICATEUR

(84) Designated Contracting States:
**AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE TR**

(74) Representative: **TBK-Patent
Bavariaring 4-6
80336 München (DE)**

(30) Priority: **06.11.2000 JP 2000338025**

(56) References cited:
**JP-A- 7 071 795 JP-A- 10 172 592
JP-U- 62 130 321 US-A- 5 698 161
US-A1- 2001 010 871**

(43) Date of publication of application:
27.08.2003 Bulletin 2003/35

(73) Proprietors:
• **NOK CORPORATION**
Tokyo 105-8585 (JP)
• **Honda Motor Co., Ltd.**
Tokyo 107-8556 (JP)

- **PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN** vol. 014, no. 314 (C-0737), 5 July 1990 (1990-07-05) - & JP 02 107317 A (DAINIPPON INK & CHEM INC; others: 01), 19 April 1990 (1990-04-19)
- **PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN** vol. 2000, no. 06, 22 September 2000 (2000-09-22) & JP 2000 084369 A (DAINIPPON INK & CHEM INC), 28 March 2000 (2000-03-28)
- **PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN** vol. 1997, no. 02, 28 February 1997 (1997-02-28) & JP 08 273687 A (MAZDA MOTOR CORP), 18 October 1996 (1996-10-18)

(72) Inventor: **OKADA, Keiji,**
c/o **NOK CORPORATION**
Fujisawa-shi,
Kanagawa 251-0042 (JP)

Note: Within nine months of the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent in the European Patent Bulletin, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to that patent, in accordance with the Implementing Regulations. Notice of opposition shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid. (Art. 99(1) European Patent Convention).

Description

Technical Field

[0001] This invention relates to a humidifier for humidifying gas supplied to e.g., a fuel cell.

Background Art

[0002] In a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, a device for humidifying and supplying a fuel gas such as hydrogen, etc., and an oxidizer gas such as oxygen, etc. (hereinafter both are called a reaction gas) is required.

[0003] For example, a device utilizing a hollow fiber membrane as disclosed in JP-A-8-273687 is known as such a humidifier.

[0004] The humidifier in the conventional art will be explained by reference to FIG. 5. FIG. 5 is a schematically sectional view of the humidifier in the conventional art.

[0005] As shown in this figure, the humidifier 100 in the conventional art consists schematically of a case 101 and a hollow fiber membrane bundle 102 filled within this case 101.

[0006] The case 101 is approximately formed in a cylindrical shape, and has an opening portion 101a at one end of the cylinder and an opening portion 101b at the other end. Further, the case 101 has opening portions 101c, 101d on its sidewall.

[0007] And, the hollow fiber membrane bundle 102 is filled within this case 101. One end of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 102 is sealed between the outer wall faces of the hollow fiber membranes and between the outer wall faces of the hollow fiber membranes and the inner wall face of the case 101 so as to open only the hollow interior in the opening portion 101a. The other end of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 102 is similarly sealed between the outer wall faces of the hollow fiber membranes and between the outer wall faces of the hollow fiber membranes and the inner wall face of the case 101 so as to open only the hollow interior in the opening portion 101b.

[0008] Also, a clearance 103 is arranged on the side face side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 102 between the hollow fiber membrane bundle 102 and the case 101.

[0009] Thus, a first path entering the hollow interior of the hollow fiber membrane of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 102 from the opening portion 101a side (arrow S0), and reaching the other end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 102 through the hollow interior (arrow S1) is arranged. Further, a second path entering the interior of the case 101 from the opening portion 101d (arrow T0), and reaching the exterior of the case 101 from the opening portion 101c through the clearance 103 is arranged.

[0010] Thus, for example, the reaction gas is flowed to the first path and water is flowed to the second path so that the reaction gas within the first path is humidified

by transmitting the water within the second path through the membrane of the hollow fiber membrane and diffusing this water into the first path.

[0011] Since the humidifier is constructed so as to perform a humidifying action by utilizing that water is transmitted through the membrane of the hollow fiber membrane in this way, the humidifying action is accelerated as the area of the flowing water coming in contact with the hollow fiber membrane is increased.

[0012] However, in the above conventional art, since the construction for setting plural hollow fiber membranes to a columnar bundle and flowing water onto its outer circumferential wall face is used, the water is flowed onto the outer circumferential surface of the bundle along the axial line. Thus, there are defects in that no water is sufficiently permeated to the interior of the bundle, and no hollow fiber membrane near the center of the bundle effectively functions, and humidifying efficiency is low.

[0013] JP-A-2000 084369 discloses a humidifier comprising the features of the preamble of claim 1.

[0014] An object of the present invention is to provide a humidifier for improving the humidifying efficiency.

Disclosure Invention

[0015] To achieve the above object, the present invention resides in a humidifier as claimed in claim 1.

[0016] Here, the upstream side of the first path may be set to one end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle, and may be also set to the other end side. Further, the upstream side of the second path may be set to the first opening portion arranged on the sidewall of the inner case, and may be also set to the second opening portion arranged on the sidewall of the outer case.

[0017] Accordingly, since the second path is arranged so as to reach the outer wall side from the inner wall side of the annular clearance, this path is extended from the inside diameter side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle filled in the annular clearance to the outside diameter side.

[0018] Thus, with the features of claim 1, when the fluid is flowed toward the bottom within the sleeve of the inner case, the fluid can be flowed from each opening portion into the hollow fiber membrane bundle with good balance.

[0019] It is also preferable that a clearance is formed between the outer circumferential face of said inner case and the inner circumferential face of said hollow fiber membrane bundle.

[0020] Thus, when the fluid is flowed from the first opening portion arranged in the inner case to the hollow fiber membrane bundle, the fluid can be equally flowed onto the inner circumferential face of the hollow fiber membrane bundle.

[0021] It is also preferable that the gas after the humidification is supplied to a fuel cell.

Brief Description of Drawings

[0022]

FIG. 1 is a schematically sectional view of a humidifier,

FIG. 2 is a perspective view showing an end portion of a hollow fiber membrane.

FIG. 3 is a schematically sectional view of a humidifier in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a schematically sectional view of a humidifier

FIG. 5 is a schematically sectional view of a humidifier in the conventional art.

Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

[0023] The preferred embodiments of this invention will next be explained exemplarily in detail by reference to the drawings. The sizes, materials, shapes, their relative arrangements, etc. of constructional parts described in these embodiments are not intended to limit the scope of this invention only to them unless they are particularly specifically described.

[0024] A humidifier will be explained by reference to FIGS. 1 and 2. FIG. 1 is a schematically sectional view of the humidifier in accordance with the first embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 2 is a perspective view showing an end portion of a hollow fiber membrane.

[0025] The humidifier 1 in accordance with this embodiment is a device for humidifying a reaction gas (a fuel gas of hydrogen, etc., and an oxidizer gas of oxygen, etc. as mentioned above) of e.g., a polymer electrolyte fuel cell.

[0026] And, as shown in these figures, the humidifier 1 is schematically constructed by an inner case 3, an outer case 4 concentrically arranged with respect to this inner case 3, and a hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 filled in an annular clearance between these cases.

[0027] The inner case 3 is constructed by a sleeve-shaped member having a bottom, and has an opening portion 32 at one end, and also has an opening portion (first opening portion) 31 on the sidewall. A single opening portion 31 may be arranged and plural opening portions 31 (plural with respect to the circumferential direction or the axial direction) may be also arranged, and they may be provided in accordance with necessity. Humidifying efficiency can be normally raised as plural opening portions are provided.

[0028] The outer case 4 is constructed by a sleeve-shaped member, and has opening portions 43, 44 at each end. In the illustrated example, the opening portion 44 is formed on the sidewall so as to perpendicularly bend a path on one end side. An opening portion (second opening portion) 41 is also arranged.

[0029] The opening portion 41 is arranged on one portion of the circumference of a portion of the outer case 4 diametrically increased so as to provide a clearance 42

between the side face of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 and the outer case 4. This is an arrangement to prevent the flow of a fluid flowing through a second path from being concentrated onto the vicinity of the opening portion 41 by detouring the clearance 42.

[0030] And, plural hollow fiber membranes 21 are filled in the annular clearance between the inner case 3 and the outer case 4, and form the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2. This hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 forms a hollow cylindrical structural body.

[0031] Here, each hollow fiber membrane 21 is constructed such that only the hollow interior faces the opening portions 43, 44 at both the ends of the outer case 4 and is opened. Namely, in an end portion on the opening portion 43 side, the portion between the outer wall faces of the respective hollow fiber membranes 21, and the portion between these outer wall faces and the inner wall face of the outer case 4 are sealed by a sealant. Further, in an end portion on the opening portion 44 side, the portion between the outer wall faces of the respective hollow fiber membranes 21, the portion between these outer wall faces and the inner wall face of the outer case 4, and the portion between these outer wall faces and the outer wall face of the inner case 3 are sealed by the sealant. Thus, only the hollow interior faces the opening portions and is opened at both the ends of each hollow fiber membrane 21.

[0032] The opening portion 31 arranged in the above inner case 3, and the opening portion 41 arranged in the outer case 4 are constructed so as to be located on inner positions (inner in the axial direction) than positions sealed by the sealant.

[0033] Thus, a first path entering the hollow interior 21a of the hollow fiber membrane 21 from one end side (opening portion 43 side) of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 (arrow S0), and reaching the other end side (opening portion 44 side) of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 through the hollow interior 21a (arrow S1) is arranged.

[0034] Further, a second path entering the inner case 3 from the opening portion 32 (arrow T0), and entering the clearance between the inner case 3 and the outer case 4 from the opening portion 31, and entering the interior of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2, and reaching the device exterior from the opening portion 41 arranged in the outer case 4 through between the outer wall faces of the hollow fiber membranes 21 (arrow T1) is arranged.

[0035] Routes shown by the arrows of these first and second paths are set to explain the paths, and do not necessarily mean that the fluid (a humidifying object gas and a fluid including moisture) is flowed in the directions shown by these arrows.

[0036] In accordance with such a construction, the reaction gas as a humidifying object gas is flowed to one of the first and second paths, and the fluid including moisture is flowed to the other. Here, water, a wet gas (an exhaust gas from cells of a fuel cell can be used), etc.

are included in the fluid including moisture.

[0037] Thus, when the fluid including moisture flows along the membrane wall face of the hollow fiber membrane, the fluid is moved to a flowing passage of the reaction gas, and the moisture is dispersed into the reaction gas, and the gas is humidified.

[0038] This is because, when the gases of different humidities (or moistures) are flowed to the interior and the exterior of the membrane, the moisture flows from the direction of a high water vapor partial pressure to the direction of a low water vapor partial direction in nature, and only the moisture is transmitted through the membrane in nature.

[0039] As mentioned above, in this embodiment, the second path is formed so as to extend through the outer wall face side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 forming the hollow cylindrical structural body from the inner wall face of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2. Therefore, it contributes to the humidifying action from the hollow fiber membrane located on the internal side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 to the hollow fiber membrane located on the external side so that humidifying efficiency can be improved.

[0040] Further, as particularly shown in FIG. 1, the distance of the second path with respect to the axial direction can be sufficiently secured by arranging the opening portion 31 on one end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2, and arranging the opening portion 41 on the other end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 so that the humidifying efficiency can be further improved.

[0041] As mentioned above, the humidifying efficiency can be improved by the embodiment of the present invention. Further, it is thus possible to make the device compact in equivalent performance, or reduce the number of used hollow fiber membranes in comparison with the conventional art.

[0042] For example, when the hollow fiber membrane bundle is set to have a columnar structure as in the conventional art and the columnar structure is set to 31 mm in outside diameter and 150 mm in length, 1000 hollow fiber membranes are required. In contrast to this, when the hollow fiber membrane bundle is set to have a cylindrical structure as in this embodiment and the cylindrical structure is set to 16 mm in inside diameter, 32 mm in outside diameter and 150 mm in length, it is sufficient to arrange 750 hollow fiber membranes, and humidifying performance can be improved by about 10 %.

[0043] Here, the humidifying performance is evaluated by a water vapor transmitting amount on a drying gas side when the humidifier is operated at the pressure and the flow rate of water or a wet gas, and the pressure and the flow rate of the drying gas to be humidified.

[0044] The cylindrical structure is set to 13 mm in inside diameter, 26 mm in outside diameter and 150 mm in length and 550 hollow fiber membranes are used to satisfy the humidifying performance equivalent to that in the case of the conventional art. Therefore, the device could be made compact by about 33 %.

[0045] Some more concrete embodiments will next be explained on the basis of the above embodiments.

(First example)

[0046] A polymer material such as polyimide, etc. is used as a raw material of the hollow fiber membrane 21. And, the hollow fiber membrane 21 has 3 mm or less (preferably 0.2 to 1 mm) in outside diameter, and plural very small holes of several nm are formed on its wall face.

[0047] For example, 100 to 10000 hollow fiber membranes 21 are bundled and filled in the annular clearance between the inner case 3 and the outer case 4 so that the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 is formed. As mentioned above, this hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 is formed in a hollow cylindrical shape, and is designed such that its outside diameter is about 1.2 to 3 times the inside diameter and is larger by about 2 to 100 mm than the inside diameter (e.g., the inside diameter is set to 10 to 100 mm, and the outside diameter is set to 12 to 200 mm). The hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 is also set to about 50 to 500 mm in length.

[0048] Further, the portion between the outer wall faces of the respective hollow fiber membranes 21, the portion between these outer wall faces and the inner wall face of the outer case 4 and the portion between these outer walls and the outer wall face of the inner case 3 are sealed at both the ends of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2. Furthermore, an adhesive of epoxy resin, urethane, etc. is used as a sealant for fixing the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2.

[0049] A core pipe manufactured by using hard resin such as PC (polycarbonate), PPO (polyphenylene oxide), etc. is used as the inner case 3.

[0050] The number of opening portions 31 arranged in this inner case 3 and the position of the opening portion 31 may be suitably designed in accordance with the required humidifying efficiency, etc. as mentioned above. In this example, plural opening portions 31 are arranged at an equal interval near one end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 with respect to the circumferential direction. In contrast to this, the opening portion 41 is arranged in one place in the outer case 4 near the other end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2.

[0051] In accordance with such a construction, as shown in FIG. 1, the reaction gas was flowed to the first path from the arrow S0 to the arrow S1, and water was flowed to the second path from the arrow T0 to the arrow T1.

[0052] Thus, the water flowed into the second path flows from the opening portions 31 arranged at the equal interval near one end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 with respect to the circumferential direction to the opening portion 41 arranged near the other end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2. Therefore, this water flows by a sufficient distance in the axial direction from the interior of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 to the exterior.

[0053] Accordingly, each of all the filled hollow fiber membranes 21 effectively functions. Since the clearance 42 is formed, the water exuded to this clearance 42 can be easily discharged from the opening portion 41 by detouring the clearance 42. Therefore, no flow is concentrated onto the vicinity of the opening portion 41.

[0054] The humidifier excellent in humidifying efficiency could be realized as mentioned above.

(Second example)

[0055] In this example, water flowed to the second path is flowed in the direction reverse to that in the case of the first example, i.e., from the opening portion 41 side to the opening portion 32 side via the opening portion 31 by using the humidifier of the same structure as the above first example.

[0056] In this case, the humidifier excellent in humidifying efficiency could be similarly realized.

(Third example)

[0057] In the above first example, water is shown as the fluid including moisture as a humidifying medium, but a wet gas is used in this example.

[0058] Here, since an exhaust gas after generating electricity by fuel cells holds high humidity in a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, this exhaust gas can be utilized as the humidifying medium (wet gas).

[0059] In this case, the humidifier excellent in humidifying efficiency could be similarly realized.

(Fourth example)

[0060] In the above first example, the reaction gas is flowed to the first path, and water is flowed to the second path. However, in this example, water or a wet gas is flowed to the first path, and the reaction gas is flowed to the second path. No flowing direction of each fluid is limited.

[0061] In this case, the humidifier excellent humidifying efficiency could be similarly realized.

[0062] A humidifier in accordance with the present invention will be explained by reference to FIG. 3.

[0063] In the above first example, the opening portion 31 is arranged only near one end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2. However, this example will be explained when plural opening portions 31 are arranged in different places in the axial direction.

[0064] The other constructions and actions are the same as the first embodiment. Accordingly, the same constructional portions are designated by the same reference numerals, and their explanations are omitted.

[0065] FIG. 3 is a schematically sectional view of the humidifier in accordance with the present invention.

[0066] As shown in this figure, in the humidifier 1a in accordance with this example, plural opening portions are further arranged in different positions in the axial di-

rection as the opening portions arranged in the inner case 3 in addition to the opening portion 31 arranged near one end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2. In the illustrated example, opening portions 32, 33 are further arranged in two places.

[0067] And, the opening diameters of these opening portions are set so as to gradually reduce toward the bottom of the sleeve-shaped inner case 3 having the bottom.

[0068] In accordance with such a construction, when water or the wet gas is flowed to the second path from the arrow T0 to the arrow T1, the flowing-in amount in the flowing-in of the water or the wet gas from each opening portion into the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 can be adjusted by each opening portion.

[0069] Here, when the arranging case of plural opening portions in different positions in the axial direction is considered, flow path resistance within the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 is reduced as the opening portion is near T1. Accordingly, if plural opening portions of the same size are bored, the flow is concentrated onto the opening portion near T1 so that only one portion of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 is effectively utilized.

[0070] Therefore, by reducing the opening diameter of the opening portion near the bottom portion, the flow path resistance of this opening portion is increased and the flow rate of this opening portion is limited. Thus, the water or the wet gas is flowed into the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 with good balance from the opening portion far from T1 so that the entire hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 can be effectively utilized in the humidification.

[0071] Thus, humidifying performance can be set to be best by gradually reducing and balancing the opening diameter of the opening portion.

[0072] Accordingly, each hollow fiber membrane 21 can be more effectively practically used, and humidifying efficiency can be raised.

[0073] A humidifier will be explained by reference to FIG. 4.

[0074] In this example, the arranging case of a clearance 34 between the outer circumferential face of the inner case 3 and the inner circumferential face of the sleeve-shaped hollow fiber membrane bundle 2 will be explained.

[0075] The other constructions and actions are the same as the first embodiment. Therefore, the same constructional portions are designated by the same reference numerals, and their explanations are omitted.

[0076] FIG. 4 is a schematically sectional view of the humidifier,

[0077] As shown in this figure, in the humidifier 1b in accordance with this example, the clearance 34 is arranged between the outer circumferential face of the inner case 3 and the inner circumferential face of the sleeve-shaped hollow fiber membrane bundle 2. Accordingly, when water or a wet gas is flowed to the second path from the arrow T0 to the arrow T1, the water or the wet gas flowed out of the opening portion 31 is flowed to

the clearance 34. Therefore, the water or the wet gas can be equally sent to the inner circumferential face of the hollow fiber membrane bundle 2.

[0078] Accordingly, each hollow fiber membrane 21 can be more effectively practically used so that humidifying efficiency can be raised.

Industrial Application

[0079] As explained above, in the present invention, the second path is extended from the inside diameter side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle filled in the annular clearance to the outside diameter side. Accordingly, the hollow fiber membranes from the interior of the bundle to the exterior can be practically used so that humidifying efficiency can be improved.

[0080] If the first opening portion is arranged near one end of the hollow fiber membrane bundle and the second opening portion is arranged near the other end of the hollow fiber membrane bundle, the second path is extended from one end side of the hollow fiber membrane bundle to the other end side so that the hollow fiber membrane can be more effectively practically used.

[0081] If plural first opening portions are arranged in different positions with respect to the axial direction and the opening diameters of these opening portions are set to be gradually reduced toward the bottom of the inner case, the fluid can be flowed from each opening portion into the hollow fiber membrane bundle with good balance in the flowing case of the fluid toward the bottom within the sleeve of the inner case so that the hollow fiber membrane can be more effectively practically used.

Claims

1. A humidifier (1) comprising:

a sleeve-shaped inner case (3) having a bottom;
a sleeve-shaped outer case (4) concentrically arranged with respect to the inner case; and
a hollow fiber membrane bundle (2) filled in an annular clearance between the outer case (4) and the inner case (3);
wherein the humidifier (1) further comprises:
a first path (50, 51) from one end side of said hollow fiber membrane bundle (2) to the other end side through the hollow interior (21a) of each hollow fiber membrane (21); and
a second path (T0, T1) from a first opening portion (31) arranged on the sidewall of said inner case (3) to a second opening (41) portion arranged on the sidewall of said outer case (4) through between the outer wall faces of the respective hollow fiber membranes (21) within the hollow fiber membrane bundle (2); and
a humidifying object gas is flowed to one of said first and second paths, and a fluid including

moisture is flowed to the other,
wherein a plurality of said first opening portions (31, 32, 33) are arranged in different positions with respect to the axial direction,
characterized in that
the opening diameters of these opening portions (31, 32, 33) are set to be gradually reduced toward the bottom of the inner case.

2. The humidifier according to claim 1, wherein a clearance is formed between the outer circumferential face of said inner case (3) and the inner circumferential face of said hollow fiber membrane bundle (2).

3. The humidifier according to any one of claims 1 or 2, wherein the gas after the humidification is supplied to a fuel cell.

Patentansprüche

1. Befeuchtungsvorrichtung (1) mit:

einem hülsenförmigen inneren Gehäuse (3) mit einem Boden;
einem hülsenförmigen äußeren Gehäuse (4), das konzentrisch in Bezug auf das Innere Gehäuse angeordnet ist; und
einem hohlen Fasermembranbündel (2), das in einen ringförmigen Spalt zwischen den äußeren Gehäuse (4) und dem inneren Gehäuse (3) gefüllt ist;
wobei die Befeuchtungsvorrichtung (1) des Weiteren Folgendes aufweist:
einen ersten Weg (50, 51) von einer Endseite des hohlen Fasermembranbündels (2) zu der anderen Endseite durch das hohle Innere (21a) jeder hohlen Fasermembran (21); und
einen zweiten Weg (T0, T1) von einem ersten Öffnungsabschnitt (31), der an der Seitenwand des inneren Gehäuses (3) angeordnet ist, zu einem zweiten Öffnungsabschnitt (41), der an der Seitenwand des äußeren Gehäuses (4) angeordnet ist, zwischen den Außenwandflächen der entsprechenden hohlen Fasermembrane (21) hindurch in dem hohlen Fasermembranbündel (2); und wobei
ein zu befeuchtendes Objektgas zu einem von dem ersten und dem zweiten Weg strömt und ein Fluid mit Feuchtigkeit zu dem anderen strömt,
wobei eine Vielzahl der ersten Öffnungsabschnitte (31, 32, 33) in verschiedenen Positionen in Bezug auf die axiale Richtung angeordnet ist,
dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass
die Öffnungsdurchmesser dieser Öffnungsabschnitte (31, 32, 33) so eingestellt sind, dass sie

zu dem Boden des inneren Gehäuses hin allmählich verringert sind.

2. Befeuchtungsvorrichtung gemäß Anspruch 1, wobei ein Spalt zwischen der Außenumfangsfläche des inneren Gehäuses (3) und der innen Umfangsfläche des hohlen Fasermembranbündels (2) ausgebildet ist.
3. Befeuchtungsvorrichtung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 oder 2, wobei das Gas nach der Befeuchtung einer Brennstoffzelle zugeführt wird.

externe dudit boîtier interne (3) et la face circonferentielle interne dudit faisceau de membranes (2) en fibres creuses.

- 5 3. Humidificateur selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 ou 2, dans lequel après l'humidification, le gaz est fourni à une pile à combustible.

Revendications

15

1. Humidificateur (1) comprenant:

un boîtier interne (3) en forme de manchon avec un fond; 20
 un boîtier externe (4) en forme de manchon agencé de manière concentrique par rapport au boîtier interne; et
 un faisceau de membranes (2) en fibres creuses rempli dans un espace annulaire entre le boîtier externe (4) et le boîtier interne (3); 25
 dans lequel l'humidificateur (1) comprend en plus:
 un premier chemin (50, 51) allant d'un côté d'extrémité dudit faisceau de membranes (2) en fibres creuses jusqu'à l'autre côté d'extrémité à travers la partie intérieure creuse (21a) de chaque membrane (21) en fibres creuse; et 30
 un deuxième chemin (T0, T1) allant d'une première partie d'ouverture (31) agencée sur la paroi latérale dudit boîtier interne (3) jusqu'à une deuxième partie d'ouverture (41) agencée sur la paroi latérale dudit boîtier externe (4) en passant entre les faces de paroi externes des membranes (21) en fibres creuses respectives dans le faisceau de membranes (2) en fibres creuses; 40
 et
 un gaz d'humidification est fait circuler vers l'un desdits premier et deuxième chemins, et un fluide comprenant de l'humidité est fait circuler vers l'autre, 45
 dans lequel une pluralité desdites premières parties d'ouverture (31, 32, 33) sont agencées dans différentes positions par rapport à la direction axiale, 50
caractérisé en ce que
 les diamètres d'ouverture de ces parties d'ouverture (31, 32, 33) sont réglés pour être graduellement réduits vers le fond du boîtier interne. 55

2. Humidificateur selon la revendication 1, dans lequel un espace est formé entre la face circonferentielle

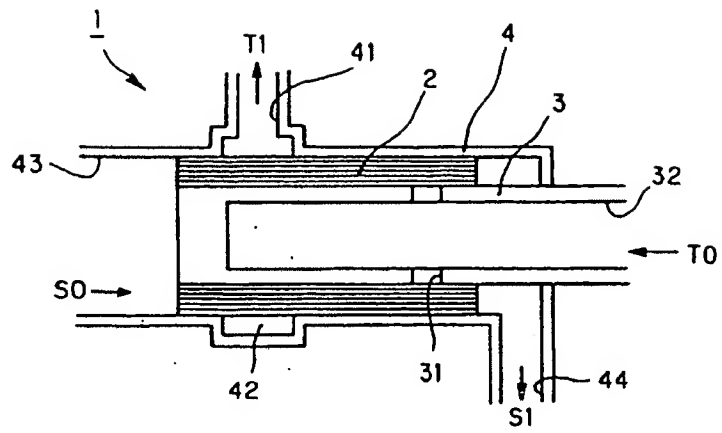


FIG. 1

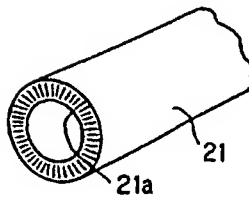


FIG. 2

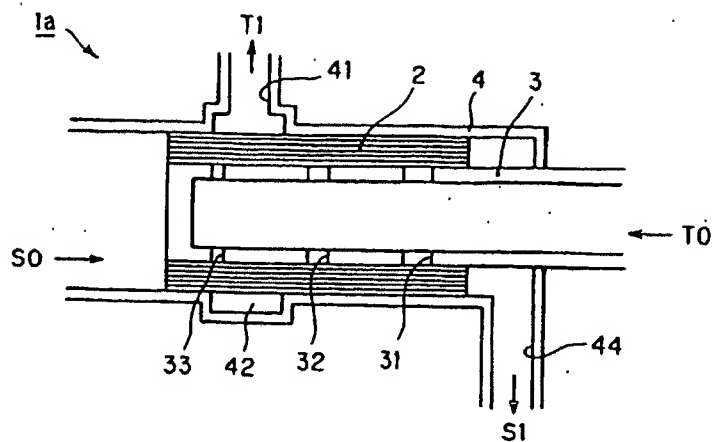


FIG. 3

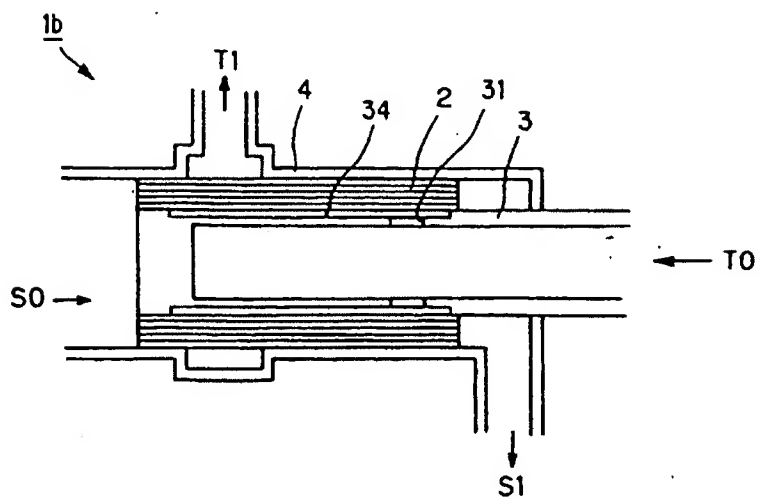


FIG. 4

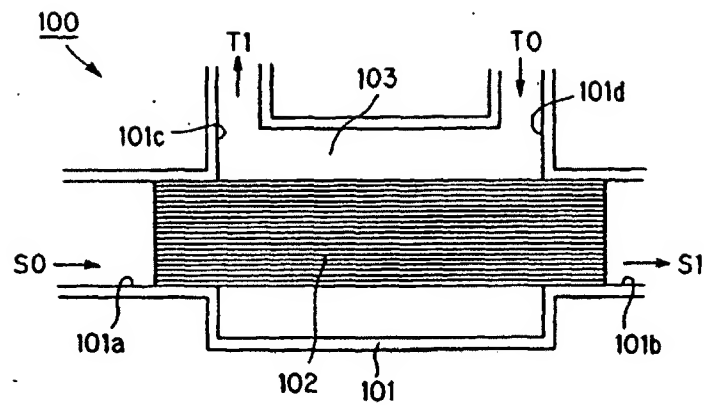


FIG. 5

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

Patent documents cited in the description

- JP 8273687 A [0003]
- JP 2000084369 A [0013]